

Church Contributes to Canada's Growth

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The work of the Catholic Church for Canada during the past century and more may be summarized in five phases, implantation, immigration, welfare, education and integration.

Although each of these corresponds to a certain segment of the 100 years, they are profoundly woven into the fabric of the Church and country today.

Implantation corresponds to the first work of the Church, commonly associated with missionary work among the natives. This was one of the powerful motives for those who pioneered civilization in this land.

Caughnawaga was established in 1668 and its people are today known far and wide as high steel workers. They are no longer the object of missionary zeal. Ile a la Crosse was founded in 1846 in Northern Saskatchewan on the great water route.

Indian Missions

When Father G. Morice, O.M.I., landed on the West Coast, via New York and San Francisco, Vancouver was only a sawmill. He found an Indian school there, already with a brass band. One would expect that this chapter in Canadian history would be about phased out.

But, in 1932, there were still 34 Indian boarding schools in Western Canada. Schools for specialized purposes were built at Sept-Iles and Pointe-Bleue, Quebec, respectively, as late as 1952 and 1960. Serious work among the Eskimo, after years of intermittent efforts, did not begin until the 1920's.

In the last few years an almost entirely new kind of work with Canada's first inhabitants has begun in the metropolitan areas. Gone today are the backbreaking trips, the formidable task of learning and codifying of dialects, the main burdens of subsistence, but new difficulties arise. One of the greatest enemies of the early missionary was « firewater ». It still is.

Today, more than 629 Oblate Fathers and others, in seven missionary vicariates, are at work across the northern reaches of Canada from Schefferville, P.Q., to Old Crow, Vt., with a major part of their time at the service of the Indian and Eskimo. Further south, along Canada's urban belt, about 150 priests carry on similar ministry as pastors, teachers, welfare officers, community advisors, linguistic experts friends.

Among the Eskimos

In the Far North and in Labrador religious motivation is translated into the organization of cooperatives for the production and sale of native art, construction of homes, scientific management of fishing and trapping and logging, acquisition of immediately useful trades.

This is the case at Povungnituk, Igulik, Whale Post, Gjoa Haven, Pelly Bay, Franklin, Holman Island, Ft. Rae, Coppermine. On the north bank of the Lower St. Lawrence, an Economic Development Council links the people and clergy of twenty villages.

This saga sparkles with stirring details: Provencher, putting his hand to the plow to instruct his nomads; Babel, charting the mineral riches of Ungava; Dutilly,

painstakingly collecting and cataloguing the flora of the Barren Lands; Turquetil, playing games with tiny tots in order to learn the Eskimo language; Frapsause and Buliard, disappearing into the Arctic mist; Binamme, founding a ski club to create community spirit after 13 fruitless years in one spot; Hugonard, match-making in order to found a new colony in Saskatchewan; Breynat, cutting off his gangrened toe with a penknife; Father 'Anonymous' of the most northern mission offering Viscount Alexander a glass of excellent wine, made on the spot from Australian raisins, discarded by myopic but warm-hearted U.S. radar crews.

And what has the profit been? Perhaps, above all, the uplifting of the native woman, formerly a beast of burden suffocated under taboos. So much so, Bishop Breynat recalls, that Indian braves refused to pass under a choir loft in which their own daughters were singing. Today these women are turning hovels into homes, promoting education, conducting their societies, proclaiming the rights of their people in the face of occasional bureaucracy and giving their men noble and powerful reasons to show leadership.

Much else has been achieved. But if this were all, it would be worth the effort. In this land at least the natives have survived and are flourishing. They add their proud note with dignity to the chorus of Canadians, now celebrating one hundred years of nationhood.

The second major contribution, and also a continuing one of the Church to Canada, has been in work with immigrants and settlers. In the service of the Indians, she was the newcomer, bringing old values to a raw land. In the service of the immigrant she has been the inviter and the welcomer.

The fabulous Father Lacombe, now honored by a skyscraper hotel in Alberta, represents very well the blending of these works. Translator of the Scriptures, peacemaker among his native friends, he followed the

waterways and then he helped bring in the railways.

These two modes of transportation symbolize the transition of attention from the old to the new inhabitants of Canada. And so it was that he tied himself to New England and to the courts of Europe to drum up immigrants and to lead them to the promised land.

The West Opens

Today it would appear that beneath this turbulent invasion of the hinterlands, under Sifton's magic, was a battle of the two founding races for the future of the West. But the Church had to offer to all, regardless of origin, the ministry of the parish and the beginning of the blending of ancient usages with New World ways.

Here is how a veteran sums up the work with one group:

« There were three waves . . . each . . . came with little more than the clothes on their back of material goods. Each wave landed . . . with different backgrounds and intellectual equipment.

The first were mostly farmers with only elementary formal education.

The second . . . were workers in search of labour, in larger industrial centres.

The last varied greatly . . . During each of these periods, from the beginning of the century to after the World War II, the parishes became not only the spiritual centre, but the centre for information, job placement, care for the entire man, spiritual, social, leisure and work, as well as home life ».

Ukrainian Rite

At one time the influx was so great and varied that a single church played host to many nationalities. To avoid quarrels over patron saints and make every

one feel at home the bishop called the church Holy Ghost, fitting reminder of the Apostles speaking all tongues on Pentecost.

Today this welcoming labor is still going on, to the enrichment of Canada. And across the land there stand four Ukrainian rite cathedrals to proclaim that Canada's welcome makes newcomers at home but allows them to bring their genius to the common treasure. Many dioceses still have directors of immigration (in Quebec, « colonization ») and one of Canada's most modern communities of nuns, the Sisters of Service, are specialists in this work.

It can be imagined that work among the natives and for immigrants soon involves the minister in all kinds of benevolent activities. This has been particularly true in Canada because the country was hardly settled on its course when the great invasions from abroad occurred. The Church also enjoyed the confidence of those in need and disposed of the personnel ready to sacrifice to be of help.

As provincial and federal politics turned towards social welfare and even social justice, much of the worry and drudgery has been lifted from the shoulders of those on the front lines.

The accent today is on competence, discretion, identification between helper and helped to instill self-confidence. But new avenues of dedication are constantly opening as men seek to guarantee equal opportunity to all.

The 200 Roman Catholic Sisterhoods, many of them primarily in this field, are adapting to the changes and striking off into more specific work.

The Grey Nuns

They are worthy successors of the four nuns who paddled to Red River Colony to begin the now oldest hospital in Western Canada and the five nuns who

arrived at Fort Providence on Great Slave Lake a century ago, to the consternation of the missionary bishop, frightened to see white women in that pioneer land.

Today more than 500 hospitals and related institutions carry on the tradition, which has never been merely one of free service to the needy, but dignified, kindly service to all.

Since the Church is sent to make disciples, her activities almost always imply an educative function. Even works of welfare teach the dignity of man, the providence of God, the beauties of brotherhood, besides requiring deep knowledge of human nature.

Schools have followed closely behind churches everywhere in Canada. The first seminary of Quebec, forerunner of Laval University, was set up at a time when the sons of explorers and of natives could occupy the same benches.

From these beginnings, here and there, have come great Catholic institutions of secular and religious learning. Today twenty such establishments stand out. In the Maritimes — Ste-Anne's, St. Dunstan's, St. Francis Xavier, St. Louis, Sacre-Coeur; in Quebec — Laval, Montreal, Sherbrooke, College Ste-Marie and Loyola; in Ontario — Ottawa Regiopolis, Assumption, Sacre-Coeur, St. Michael's, Regis College, and the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies; in the West — St. Paul's, St. Thomas More, St. Jean's, St. Marv's, and Notre Dame.

Sometimes in extension of these institutions, adult education has also developed to an astounding degree of strength.

This is the story of the Antigonish movement, which has made Father M. Coady's name blessed by five million disciples in 64 countries (1928-1965).

A similar record attends the Course of Preparation for Marriage, originally a Young Christian Worker's

project, now related to Ottawa University. Thirty countries now use it in thirteen languages (1935-1961).

An aspect of this activity commonly ignored, is the great Caisse Populaire movement of the Province of Quebec, a people's thrift and loan giant that has kept priority on local control and deep social motivation.

That province also boasts innumerable specialized professional groups including taxi drivers, commercial travelers, teetotalers, shoemakers, watchmakers, plus, of course, the guardians of culture and patriotism.

All these undertakings of the Church across the land, rest on the bedrock of community schools inspired by religious motivation, as far as conditions allow. Here is a contribution, not only formative of youth, but also symbolizing parental and democratic rights, respect for minorities, adherence to constitutional compacts, and collaboration of Church and State in the service of future Canadian citizens.

It has given Canada, on the whole, a distinctive educational orientation, with at least one lesson for the world, that of diversity in unity.

Political Influence

It is almost inevitable that a people imbued with a Christian outlook on life will influence the social and political environment in which they work out their destiny. Certainly the very birth of Confederation involved compromise between religious commitments of diverse sorts.

In the course of the first fifty years of that compact, the actual meaning of its terms were the subject of much denominational friction, all of which was reflected in both federal and provincial policies.

Sometimes directly, by official statements, very often indirectly, by modernized social doctrine, the Church has had much to do with the progress of social legislation in this country.

Even today as laws are being reshaped to conform to contemporary opinion, the extent of change is affected by Christian opinion expressed through official bodies. The Catholic Church, representing a double minority, would seem to have prevented uniformism in this country and to have helped maintain high standards of domestic morality.

The French wing has certainly given a powerful example of the virtue of patriotism, still weak in the country.

The latter part of the century however has seen the Church leaving initiative in the political and social field to individual members. Perhaps the influence of religion has become deeper; it is at least more pacific.

One contribution of Catholicism has been increasingly important: that is activity which enhances Canada's prestige abroad. Today 4,700 Catholic bishops, priests, religious, laity, carry the Catholic and Canadian helping hand to four other continents, without a tinge of imperialism.

There are two ways to conclude this survey: one statistical, the other human; the first describes the institution, the other picks out individuals in their palpitating reality.

The first is useful as it permits the multiplication of our five main points by the number of dioceses involved; the second gives a pointed answer to the question « so what? ».

Today there are 69 Roman Catholic dioceses in Canada, most of them occupying territory which was at one time under the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec.

In fact, for historical reasons better left unexplored, Quebec was the only see in what is now this nation from 1674 until 1828. Then, as a result of toleration elsewhere, the log jam broke and nineteen other dioceses came into being up to the time of Confederation.

For the record and to show the movement of

geographical expansion as well as interior complexification, they may be listed in chronological order: Kingston, 1826; Charlottetown, 1829; Montreal, 1842; St. Jean, N.S., 1842; Victoria, 1846; Ottawa, 1847; Antigonish, 1844; St. Boniface, 1847; St. John's, 1847; Chicoutimi, 1852; St. Hyacinthe, 1852; Havre-de-Grace, 1856; Hamilton, 1856; London, 1859; Bathurst, 1860; Vancouver, 1863; Rimouski, 1867.

Oldest Church

Some of these sees had churches dating back two or three centuries, the oldest being Notre Dame, in Quebec, built in 1621.

From 1867 to 1919 twenty-four dioceses were erected, to correspond to the spread of settlement, the organization of northern missions or the urbanization of established areas.

The major change, however, was the creation of the archdioceses of Winnipeg and Regina in 1915, closely following on the erection of Calgary as a diocese and Edmonton as an archdiocese in 1912, as well as the first Ukrainian see in Winnipeg in 1912.

This meant that Western Canada would not be dominated by French Catholicism. It corresponded with the great struggle in Ontario over French schools. By 1919 partnership was accepted.

Since 1919 twenty-five dioceses have again filled out the framework, the major thrust being the three Ukrainian sees set up under Winnipeg in 1956 and the grouping of the Acadian sees in 1936.

These jurisdictions embrace nearly half the population of Canada and boast three red hats in the centenary year of the first Canadian cardinal. Some dioceses are primarily missionary, others, like metropolitan Montreal's island with 1,000,000 members, are going through the throes of reorientation. All of this is now centralized to a very limited extent in the

Canadian Catholic Conference, founded at Ottawa in 1943.

Canada's Saints

It is a pleasure to conclude with a list of remarkable individuals who may be called the end product of the system. Kateri Tekakwitha may be the first native American to be declared a saint.

Among dedicated women, Mother d'Youville, wife, mother, widow, nun is now Blessed, where once she was reviled for identifying with the sick, the orphan, the drunkard.

Brother André, humble doorman of St. Joseph's in Montreal, attracts the admiration of the average man and, across the country, in Edmonton, the life and virtues of Brother Anthony, handyman († 1945), shine more brightly from day to day.

This year it has been announced that Vital Grandin, the lice-infested Bishop († 1902) of St. Albert and idol of Indians, practised heroic virtue.

The Church has also produced other names merit: Laurier, McNeil, Carr, Lacombe, among the dead. It would not be too difficult to compose a litany of the living of like quality, today.

These past hundred years have had their due share of lights and shadows. They had in substance set a high standard for the second hundred years of Confederation.

MISSIONS

OF

THE CONGREGATION

OF

The Missionary Oblates

OF

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